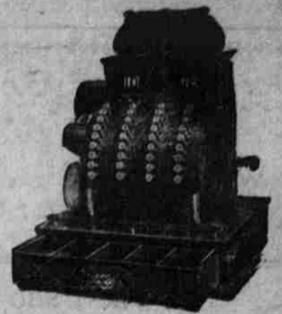




# National Cash REGISTERS



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**Evolution**

By NELLIE CRAVEY GILLMORE.

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Patricia turned from the window with a little shiver. The leaden sky had just released a hurricane of white feathers, and the rollicking flames in the great brass androned fireplace magnetized her into the depths of a huge armchair, where she could think comfortably.

At last she drew in her breath with a deep sigh. She had reached a decision. Her face was very pale from the past hour's conflict of emotions, and her lips drew a determined red line above her dimpled chin.

She glanced at the clock--4! She had promised him her answer by 6, and it was still to be written and dispatched. She dashed a refractory tear from her eye and resolutely crossed the room to a writing table. The transient

tenderness died from her face as she seized a pen from the rack and hastily dashed down the superscription.

The Elms, March 3.

My Dear Frierson--Certainly not. I can never be your wife after last night's revelation. Fortunately for me, I've quite outgrown my taste for fairy tales, and nothing you might say could alter my determination in view of the evidence of my own eyes. Very sincerely yours,  
PATRICIA THURSTON.

As she reread the words some of the savage indignation that had come into Patricia's face while she was writing them died out. She pondered a moment, then tore the sheet in two and tossed it into the wastebasket. The clock struck the half hour after 4. She took up the pen again and wrote painstakingly:

The Elms, Thursday.

Dear Mr. Frierson--After considering the matter thoroughly I have come to the decision that I cannot marry you. There are so many things that make for a happy union, and, lacking in many of the requisites, I fear it would be an unwise step. For instance, two people just entering upon matrimony should in all cases begin by being able to trust each other implicitly.

I shall return all your letters by express. Please do likewise. Yours sincerely,  
PATRICIA T.

She signed her name with a hysterical flourish and ran her eyes quickly through the curt sentences. Uncon-

sciously her red lip curved upward.

"Too sentimental," she sniffed and crumpled the paper in her hand. The clock ticked with warning insistence. Without hesitating she drew up a fresh sheet and began:

Thursday Evening.

Dear William--Of course after practicing a willful deception upon me it is out of the question for me to further consider your offer of marriage. We should never be happy with the knowledge of it between us even if I could go to the length of overlooking it, which I cannot. After all, it would have been simple for you to have told me that you had a pretty young aunt who was coming to spend the week. Fancy the shock I experienced upon seeing you kiss a girl--stranger--at the Clanceys' last night! And so farewell.

PATRICIA.

She stared at the composition a second, the words running together in an aggravating fashion. At last her gaze



laconically:

Billy--All is over between us. My answer is "No." Come for your letters and don't fail to bring mine. P. T.

She folded the note with cold, dispassionate fingers. A pang went through her. She caught in her breath with a dry, audible sound. "Unexpected; telegram indeed!" she mused angrily. "I don't believe a word of it."

The striking of the half hour nerved her to seal the letter quickly and address it to "1918 West Twenty-ninth Street, Mr. William K. Frierson, City."

She stamped it with deadly deliberation and pressed the bell. While waiting for the messenger she sat staring absent at the name she had written--his name, written it for the one hundred and seventeenth--and the last time. She continued to stare at the stereotyped address through a blurred vision. After all, perhaps she had not expressed herself just right; at least, she might have been more courteous, as this was the end. There were still thirty minutes of grace. The chauffeur, running at speed limit, could make the distance in twenty!

She rose and threw the letter into the fire, then with a funny little gleam in her eyes watched it curl and blacken and sift to nothingness. She turned toward the writing table again, her thoughts shaping themselves rapidly and clearly. It was positively her last chance to be diplomatic, firm--final. Crimson flags were waving in her cheeks; twin sparks had kindled blue flames in her eyes; her breath came and went in little jerks. But her hands were steady as a die. She wrote:

Dearest Billy--Come. PAT.

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Via the A. & C. R. R. Co. will be continued until Sept 12 and 13. Train No. 24, leaving Portland at 5:30 p. m., will continue to run through to Seaside until Sept. 30th.

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You feel no electricity--attach to any incandescent socket--low expense would surprise you--let us explain to YOU.

ASTORIA ELECTRIC CO.

"DEAREST BILLY," SHE WROTE, "COME" cleared. But how ridiculous! The next thing he'd be thinking she was--jealous! She must be more dignified, more impersonal. Once more she wrote:

My Dear Billy--No, do not get the ring. We have made a mistake. Let us still be friends. Cordially,  
PATTY.

P. S.--By the way, I never knew before that your grandmother had been twice married. Strange you didn't mention it all these years. There's quite a difference in your mother's and Miss Healy's age, isn't there?

The clock announced 5. Patricia glanced around, startled, to assure herself with her eyes that her ears had heard aright. In the tall mirror opposite that stretched from floor to ceiling she got a transitory glimpse of her face. It was pathetically altered. Her eyes, purple ringed with misery, stared mockingly back at her. The self contempt that swept over her hardened them instantly. Anything written under the influence of such an expression could not be other than absurd. With a petulant hand she swept the still unblotted lines aside and scratched

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